



Media Contact:
Paradise Advertising & Marketing, Inc.
(727) 821-5155 ext 110
Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens
(407) 323-4450 ext. 115

**ENTER A WORLD OF ENCHANTMENT AT THE
CENTRAL FLORIDA ZOO & BOTANICAL GARDENS**

Discover a world of animals in the enchanted, tropical world of the Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens, located just north of Orlando in Sanford, on the shores of Lake Monroe. The Zoo is dedicated to the trustworthy stewardship of the natural environment through the exhibition of living animals and plants and sustaining programs in wildlife education and conservation. Preserving the wonder of animals and the beauty of their habitats, sharing knowledge, engaging visitors and celebrating our natural world are the foundation of its mission.

The park is highlighted by lush forests of graceful palms, towering pines and stately live oaks that provide a spectacular environment for an international ensemble of hundreds of animals including birds, primates, mammals, felines, reptiles and amphibians. In 2007 the Zoo achieved botanical garden status. The gardens are interspersed throughout the Zoo and include over 800 plant species, highlighting many of the native plants found in Florida. These plants create a beautiful, lush landscape for the enjoyment of visitors and the plant collection will show examples of plant diversity and their relationships to the animals that depend on them, providing an educational opportunity not found in most botanical gardens.

First established as the Sanford Zoo in 1923 with a collection of donated animals held by the Sanford Fire Department, the Zoo was in danger of closing in 1971 when the city announced it was planning to dispose of its animal collection. The Zoo's mission, however, continued when an initial support group dubbed the Seminole Zoological Society came to the rescue. The Society, now known as the Central Florida Zoological Society, provides much-needed volunteer and financial support to sustain the mission of the Zoo.

Owned and operated by the Central Florida Zoological Society, Inc., a private, non-profit charitable organization, the Zoo provides recreational and educational opportunities to nearly 250,000 guests annually. Through its many education and conservation efforts, the Zoo is preserving the animals and habitats that comprise a rich global heritage.

The newest addition to the Zoo is the *Wharton-Smith* Tropical Splash Ground where children of all ages will find welcome relief in the warm Florida weather. Located at the front of the Zoo, the Splash Ground was designed for those hot and humid days in Florida when you just want to cool off. The new Splash Ground features unique water sources resembling some of the local residents and former residents of the Zoo including an alligator, frog, and hippopotamus, as well as raining trees, a water tunnel and a bucket dump. It's just waiting for children-of-all-ages to enjoy.

Many changes have taken place in the past five years, including the *Community State Mortgage Corp.* Spider Monkey exhibit. The exhibit has a Mesoamerican-Mayan temple motif with an enrichment pond and tropical foliage and allows the spider monkeys to climb, swing and frolic. The glass viewing deck even allows the monkeys to see guests eye to eye! In addition, the American

alligator, crocodile and caiman also received a glass viewing deck, thanks to Pro-Tech Heating and Air-Conditioning, Inc., making it much easier to see these incredible beasts.

The Zoo also added the *Horizon Homes of Central Florida* Australia exhibit which houses kangaroos and emus; an Aldabra tortoise exhibit; and expanded the zebu exhibit in the children's area, Animal Adventure.

The newest exhibit added to the Zoo's botanical collection is the Porcupines of the Plant Kingdom. The exhibit has been built adjacent to the African Crested Porcupine exhibit and highlights the similar defense mechanisms used in the plant and animal kingdoms. The plants exhibited feature a variety of thorns, spines, and prickles used to protect the juicy flesh within that plant.

One of the most popular of the Zoo's programs is the up-close and personal Animal Encounters, in which docents (trained volunteers) educate visitors about the characteristics of nearly 70 animals ranging from snakes to screech owls to alligators.

Programs for all grade levels means there is something for everyone at the Zoo. Targeting benchmarks of the Florida Sunshine State standards with hands-on activities make our fieldtrips meaningful as well as fun. The *Wayne M. Densch* Discovery Center and the ZOOLab facility offer unique learning opportunities that truly bring the "Classroom to Life." Guided tours, animal presentations, over night adventures, outreaches, home school classes, Boy Scout and Girl Scout programs and many other opportunities are available throughout the year.

Our exciting summer camps have a dozen different themed weeklong adventures for ages 6 to 12. Attend half day or full day, with early drop off and late pick up options. Both indoor and outdoor activities, crafts, games and of course plenty of live animal encounters make these fun camps popular with all budding zoologists! Younger children and their parents can also enjoy our Cub Club preschool and parent class series together.

The Zoo also participates in 19 cooperative management programs through the Species Survival Plan and Population Management Plans governed by the Association of Zoos and Aquariums. These preservation programs for endangered species include the Grand Cayman iguana, Aruba Island rattlesnake, King vulture, bald eagle, hyacinth macaw, red-fronted macaw, hawk-headed parrot, violet plantain-eater, red ruffed lemur, cotton-top tamarin, black howler, black-handed spider monkey, lesser spot-nosed guenon, siamang, cheetah, black-footed cat, clouded leopard, Amur leopard, and Asiatic elephant. By maintaining a viable gene pool, these management programs ensure a sound future for critically endangered animals. The Zoo's commitment to preservation efforts is evidenced also by its work as a facilitator in generating revenue in support of conservation projects in species' countries of origin. Recently, Zoo staff traveled to the Cayman Islands to work directly with the Grand Cayman rock iguanas. These iguanas are considered one of the most rare lizard species in the world, with only 50 in the wild and 14 in captivity.

The Central Florida Zoological Park is open from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. seven days a week except Thanksgiving Day and Christmas Day. Admission is \$9.95 for adults, \$5.95 for children (3-12 years) and \$7.95 for senior citizens 60 years or older. Children 2 years and under are admitted free. For additional information, please call the Central Florida Zoo & Botanical Gardens at 407-323-4450.

###